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AGO, D/A ltr, 11 Jun 1980

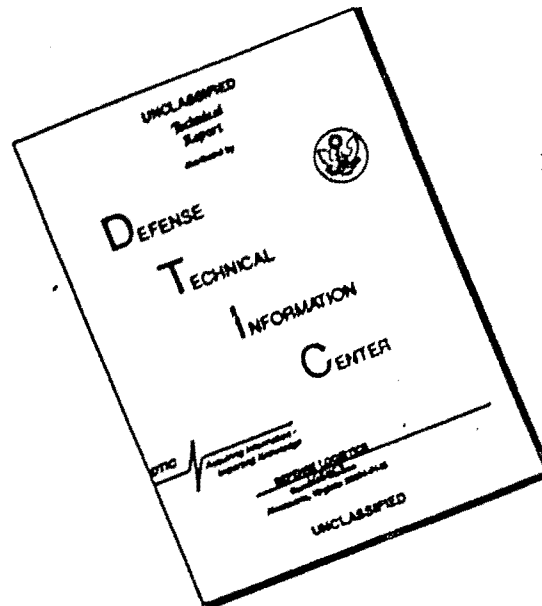
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REPLY TO  
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DAAG-PAP-A (M) (17 Jan 73) DAFD-OTT

31 January 1973

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: LTC Willard A. Holbrook III,  
Province Senior Advisor, Phu Yen Province, 22 May 1971 - 13 Dec 1972 (U)

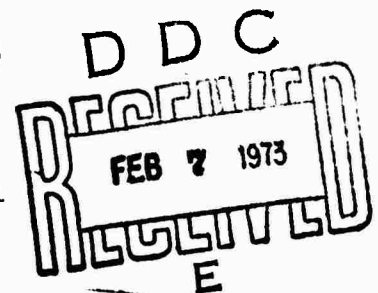
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1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Report, (U) 2 July 1971.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of LTC Willard A. Holbrook III, subject as above.
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*Verne L. Bowers*  
VERNE L. BOWERS  
Major General, USA  
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HEADQUARTERS  
CIVIL OPERATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT  
Phu Yen Province, II Corps & Military Region 2  
MACV Advisory Team 28  
APO San Francisco 96205

COMPLETION OF TOUR REPORT  
(RCS: MACV CORDS 174.01)

SECTION I

Name: Willard A. Holbrook III

Grade: LTC

PII Redacted SSN: [REDACTED]

Branch of Service: US Army

Province: Phu Yen

Inclusive Dates of Tour: 22 May 1971 - 13 Dec 72

Expected RVN Departure Date: 15 December 1972

Previous Tour In Vietnam: 1 Sep 62 - 3 Dec 63

Previous Tour Assignment: Senior Advisor, 3rd Airborne Battalion, Vietnamese Airborne Brigade, TSN.

SECTION II

1. Background for assignment as PSA:

a. Military positions held:

Platoon Leader	Battalion S3	Division Training Officer
Company Exec	Battalion Exec	Division Asst G2 Air
Company Commander	Brigade S1	Corps SGS
Aide-de-Camp		DA Staff Officer

b. Areas of overseas assignment which required work with foreign nationals:

(1) Permanent duty: Germany, RVN, Dominican Republic.

(2) Temporary duty: Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, RVN, Thailand, Burma, Singapore, Australia, Great Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Turkey, Ethiopia.

c. Basic Language Training: French, Spanish, German.

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d. Military Schooling: (1) Normal progression through Armed Forces Staff College.

(2) MATA Course.

2. Training for PSA Position: The 33 week PSA course at VTC, FSI to include 523 hours of Vietnamese language training and Senior Officer Maintenance Course, Fort Knox, en route to RVN.

3. Additional Training Suggested:

The organization and instruction received in the first segment of VTC program were quite adequate. The basic six weeks in retrospect was the most beneficial and best structured. The additional twelve weeks of the District Operations and Language was less so.

I believe that of particular importance in working with foreigners is language capability. In selection of PSAs, language aptitude was considered as a criteria but was deemphasized across the board as the program grew in popularity. Initially the PSAs were given 47 weeks at VTC later it was reduced to 33 weeks and now is less than twenty. The reduction was justified considering the results obtained from the method of language instruction.

Most PSAs have found that they either "did not need to use the language" or didn't have time to pursue further instruction. Both of these answers are perhaps supportable on a selective basis. However, for optimum results an advisor should know as much as possible about the people he deals with. To do that best requires immersing himself in the environment and listening to all sources. There are innumerable situations wherein valuable attitudes and gossip is revealed in the presence of an advisor - information which would not necessarily be critical to a particular program but which can shape better approaches to gain success.

After more than ten years of training young professional soldiers to speak the Vietnamese language, it seems a bit disappointing not to have at least one fluent linguist on each advisory team.

The success of placing a language student in the foreign country to accelerate his learning has been established long ago.

I recommend an abbreviated period of training at a CONUS location to expose the prospective advisor to basic language training including the grammatical structures which he would most likely encounter. There should then be a minimum period of leave/travel time prior to his arrival in country. The first two months there should be one of complete immersion in the Vietnamese society: billeted with Vietnamese, attending Vietnamese language instruction and required to participate in the life of the country. This period could include in-country orientations but the primary purpose would be to expand the advisor's use of the language. Of the several PSAs I have talked with about this scheme, all have agreed it would have been well worth a two month extension of tour. To be able to walk into the province with the confidence in the use of the Vietnamese language

which in-country training produces would place the advisor immediately in revered respect by all associates.

The total time to train the advisor could be reduced from that needed in CONUS and with for greater proficiency attained. The expense of establishing language training course in-country would certainly be less costly than one of similar length in CONUS.

4. Recommended length of tour:

This depends on personalities and previous experience in Vietnam. For a first tour as an advisor, 18 months minimum is reasonable. The satisfaction of seeing improvement from year to year is good for both parties. Two years or more in one province would be optimum.

5. Support from Region and Saigon was Generally Satisfactory:

The effect of year-tour-turbulence, was felt strongly in routine personnel actions involving SRAC/USARV headquarters. An example of this was the early drop by DEROS rather than by ascending order of key positions. Last spring all field grade officers were exempt from early drops unless specifically requested. More company grades were released. The DSAs therefore were allowed to complete their advisory commitment. No disgruntlement ensued. The most recent cuts permitted no PSA option as to who was to be released first. There apparently was a new and less-experienced planner in DCSPER, USARV.

6. Delayed Programs:

Education - teacher applications are submitted to MCE for approval. A lengthy wait for return of the approving documents has postponed education for many children.

7. Reporting Requirements:

The reduction in reports has been timely. Those which are routine are easily managed. One time reports are somewhat disruptive as the team loses its back up in certain areas.

I have become a believer that as long as there is an advisor at district the HES should continue to be his responsibility. Now that within a few weeks at most DSAs will be withdrawn, it seems appropriate that the Vietnamization take place immediately so that some comparison of evaluations can be made.

8. MACCORDS MIS Field Reporting Requirements do adequately measure pacification progress.

The TFARS seems to be solely a US desired report which the Vietnamese are completing as a favor to us. There is little value gained from it by province. Vietnamese interest is nil.

9. Instructions from higher headquarters have been clear with no conflicting requirements.



The anticipation of a ceasefire withdrawal as a result of current preparation instructions may be difficult to reverse if negotiations are prolonged. The authorization to ship hold baggage without orders might have been delayed to reduce thoughts of early DEROS.

10. Most Clearly Defined and Directed Programs:

- a. Rural Credit.
- b. Territorial Security.
- c. Social Welfare (War Victims).
- d. Agriculture.

11. Most Effective Paramilitary Forces are:

- a. Sector Reconnaissance Group (SRG).
- b. RF.
- c. National Police.

12. Most Successful Pacification Programs:

- a. Rural Credit (ADB) - RD Cadre publicized this well.
- b. VSD (but has yet to develop support from local resources) (Local Revenue Improvent Program).
- c. NFLD.

13. Greatest Impact on Pacification:

- a. Territorial Security - where it all starts.
- b. Public Works - Opens the land/commerce.
- c. Irrigation - Provides multiple seasons for several crops and gives the farmer flexibility as to when and what he grows.
- d. Agriculture.
- e. Rural Credit - a must to the small farmer.

14. Least successful pacification programs:

- A. PSBF - Not well supported by RF/PF or Province easily subject to VC intimidation.
- b. Information - Poorly supported in vehicles & equipment.

- c. Public Health - Poor field representatives, lack of qualified staff.
- d. Education - need more teachers.

15. Least Impact on Pacification:

- a. Local Administration - Few individuals show initiative here.
- b. Land Reform - Traditional land owners are still in control, tillers are not inclined to offend them.
- c. PSDF - Only successful after GVN proves security.

16. The rural people are aware of pacification efforts - mainly through PMAT to village officials and less effectively through VIS. PRP results confirm this.

17. The people are more committed to the GVN than when I arrived. I would have hesitated on that answer if asked in June. Since that time refugees have been returned to Dong Tre and the VC has been dealt significant setbacks in Western Tuy Hoa. Three district chiefs have been replaced. Security has improved in all Districts. Since September the province chief and senior officers of the Sector Staff have been aggressively checking security forces. The performance of the political information companies (cadets) which are explaining the ceasefire position of President Thieu has been encouraging.

18. The 1972 - 1975 pacification plan is sufficiently detailed to provide guidance and set goals that will result in security and development.

There has been a clear improvement in this year's preparation for the 1973 province plan. Although some service chiefs (and the chief of PPDC) established goals for districts without coordination, the province chief brought them into line forcefully at the first briefing and work conference. Establishment of realistic goals is the objective.

19. The plan has been adequately explained to province level officials and advisors. More needs to be done to encourage service chiefs to provide more details in their portions of the plan and less repeating of generalities extracted from national plans.

### SECTION III

#### Functional Areas

#### TERRITORIAL SECURITY DIRECTORATE

##### RF/PF:

These forces are generally holding their own. The VC has scored no major success in direct contact with them. There have been some notable successes in rebuffing determined sapper attacks on company bases and district headquarter in Tuy An and Dong Xuan. When the enemy is fixed, the aggressiveness shown in attacking to destroy and in maintaining contact with a withdrawing enemy force is slight. There are flashes of bravery and good leadership which reveal that the RF/PF still possess the fighting spirit.

A major weakness in conduct of operations is communications security. Tactical information is continually transmitted in the clear. Once a contact is made during an operation the frequency is almost continuously keyed. Often conversations take place between opposing forces. On one occasion a supporting US FAC was able to use his DF to locate the VC transmitter as he talked with the RF force commander. Unfortunately, this type support is not always available and the opportunities to use it are random.

An electronic warfare element assigned at Corps level and responsive to a need for tactical direction finding (DF) and electronic surveillance would be invaluable. AN/PRC-25 and vehicle radios can be used with a relatively small DF antenna (Antenna Loop AT/784/PRC). SRAC Signal Office has assisted us in fashioning field expedient DF antennas but their range is limited. I recommend that each sector have a DF capability.

Span of Control and unity of command has been the cause of the VC's eluding what could have been certain destruction. RF commanders sometimes play the district chief/subsector commander against the sector in choosing their courses of action. In a few instances the province chief has had to clarify the command line because recalcitrant RF Commanders felt they were independent operators and not subordinate to the district chief.

The most intriguing aspect of trying to understand actions and inactions in the territorial forces lies in determining the real command line. Who's got the leverage? Certain staff officers though subordinate in rank command special attention. District chiefs plead lack of power in failing to discipline ineffective or neglectful officers. The shadow government or command within the province appears to undermine the basic tenant of firm control - discipline. Since officers are seldom cashiered and "paper" jail only delays promotion, inadequate leaders remain.

The introduction of the Sector Tactical Command Post (STCP) was a mixed blessing. I feel that the deputy for security in most provinces should be able to conduct operations as well as keep track of other security requirements with

the Sector staff. In forming the STOP in Phu Yen, however, there was an opportunity to place an aggressive tactical commander in charge of sector operations. The personalities in this case are suited to their respective missions. The STOP commander (a colonel position) reports directly to the province chief. The Deputy for Security (a LTC position) also reporting to the Province Chief has virtually withdrawn from involvement in planning and conducting operations. The scheme is working but a clean command line from Province Chief to Deputy for Security to STOP Commander would be more logical.

There is an acute shortage of qualified leaders. Phu Yen has the lowest percentage in RF officer and NCO strength in FR-2. In that there are no ARVN forces here, the priority of fill seems to be misplaced.

There are no incentives for commanding combat units. Promotions are not always based on performance, rather on political patronage and the ability to buy positions RF command slots are not sought by rising young leaders. There are enough competent officers to fill most of the command positions. The rewards of command are few and the relative safety and comfort of staff jobs are certainly more appealing to the war-wise. Though an aggressive soldier may kill the enemy more often than he is killed, he also meets the enemy more often. The comparative odds for survival are not favorable.

Lack of personnel at authorized grades is a contributor to the leadership gap. This is true from the province chief to company commanders. There are now eight lieutenant colonels in Phu Yen. The province chief finds that two of his subordinates have earlier dates of rank. Further he must deal with full colonel ROK Regimental commanders who command far fewer forces.

#### PSDF:

The upgrading of PSDF received a flurry of interest in recent months as ceasefire negotiations become more serious. The status though is relatively unchanged. PSDF will not work effectively until the more professional elements of security elements provide a better shield. Full blown rehearsals of Village/hamlet defense plans are rare. Like many other programs the idea is good but lack of demonstrated interest from the highest levels relegates it to low priority.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTORATE**

#### National Field Police:

**Successes:** Operations have doubled in the past three months; VCI roundup has been tremendously successful and processing time has been cut.

**Improvement Needed:** The conduct of check points is suspected of incorporating a low level shake-down. This could be reduced through spot checks by disguised inspectors.

### National Police Operations:

Successes: Combined operations with NPP and PF. Increased number of reports. Village Police Station construction. Family census. ID program.

Improvement needed: Communications 60% operational during normal duty hours. A periodic spot check by regional police and review of maintenance procedures are needed.

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Village Self Development: has been one of the more successful programs in Phu Yen. Commendation received from Saigon has been well deserved.

RD Cadre: The reduction in strength cleaned out the illiterate deadwood and what remains, though politically oriented, is productive and should be retained.

Ethnic Minorities: Too small in number to influence much. The EM Service Chief is active and provides good leadership, but his political voice is small.

Local Government: This is a continuing program which will take many more years. Further training and interest by higher level authorities will be needed. An understanding of the decrees currently in force, a concern to inform the people of their benefits and an enforcement of the provisions are the keys.

Aid in Kind: These funds should be used sparingly, held for emergencies. It provides a tremendous sense of accomplishment in impact situations, but should not be considered an expected source of assistance by the local government.

### WAR VICTIMS DIRECTORATE

War Victims/Social Welfare: Expensive programs but probably contribute the most to improving lives. Generally well administered. US congressional and DEPCORDS interest have certainly helped it. Locally a shortcoming exists in anticipating needs through timely requests. It is improving. The system has been given a thorough test in the Dong Xuan and Hieu Xuong excavations and proved itself capable.

### CHIEU HOI DIRECTORATE

Chieu Hoi: Well run center but operates far under capacity. As the ceasefire approached the Hoi Chanh have increased. The information obtained from them has been exploited to such an extent that the VC made it a special target for sapper attack.

September Hoi Chanh was the record high and all months since show 50-100% increase over the first six months of 1972.

## REPORTS AND ANALYSIS DIRECTORATE

Reports Requirements: The most beneficial report to the advisory effort has been the HES. Without question it gives the advisor the motivation to know about every action and inaction in every population center of this territory. I feel that this report should be retained as a US responsibility unit two months before the departure of DSAs. Since ceasefire negotiations are well along the time to transfer this responsibility is now. This would give these US Advisors at the district level the opportunity to compare evaluations.

The province report should soon be the only reporting document required to inform higher US headquarters of the status of pacification.

Report Feedback: The MR Analysts have probably done more to give advisory direction and maintain a clear evaluation of programs than any other group. The boost to morale of the DSAs in receiving by name credit and criticism directly from HQ MACV in newsletter form is obvious. No directorate has paid more attention to the guy at the end of the line than has RAD. When DSAs pass through Saigon for any reason, they can always be contacted through RAD. Because of the personal interest to each of the team members, RAD was kept more up to date on province problems and successes than any other outsiders.

## PHUNG HOANG DIRECTORATE

Phung Hoang: Most knowledgeable Americans agree that the pooling of information in the US has always faced reluctance by participants. FBI, local law enforcement et cetera have not been free in disclosing all. In the VN society the reluctance in sharing timely intelligence is deeply grown. Specific targets are rarely exposed. Additionally, high level VCI stay generally in base areas and safehavens. The National Police should have the function and with the elimination of the permanent office which contributes only marginally.

## AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Public Health: Too much building and not enough of an attempt to provide supplies and education to the hamlets. We need to establish midwives, PH workers and concerned doers with the people.

Education: Teachers, being better-educated, have a desire for better living standards and a better place in society. Few desire to be in fringe hamlets where security is not absolute and living is a chore. Perhaps an incentive system must be introduced whereby teachers in rural areas receive significantly higher pay and increased credit toward selection for higher schooling. Soon the shortage of teachers here will be relieved temporarily when approving documentation for 78 is returned by MOE, Saigon.

Public Works: Planning for continuing maintenance has been weak. There have been instances of impressively rapid repair of QL-1 after VC action and progressive road building. Major repair of QL-1 is required now, particularly in the Vung Ro

area (Deo Ca). The public works chief is not happy in Phu Yen and has allowed his lack of enthusiasm manifest itself in the organization which is characterized by lack of planning and basic management and a need for police of abuses.

Local Economic Development: There has been little with the exception of expanding and improving the irrigation system to provide multiple crops where none were previously grown. The potential is vast. Son Hoa, the province's most remote district, needs only the opening of route 7B to blossom. Irrigation and electrification projects are planned for. One of the most promising income producing projects is fish production. Although Phu Yen has one of the largest seafood takes in the country, it has no processing plant. Planning has been initiated.

Land Reform: Dan Leaty's very excellent and concise analysis of this program - its potential and the resistance to it - says it all. In Phu Yen the ability, organization and good laws exist. Here, as throughout the country, the good will and the impetus for authority to overcome tradition is still needed.

Domestic Production: The province is rich in agricultural and seafood potential and no industry. Exported are rice, hogs & cattle, seafood, salt, and nuoc mam. As mentioned above, the processing of seafood has yet to be exploited.

Labor: No Comment

Youth Affairs: Service Chief here is a strong sponsor of Scout organizations. There is a problem in lack of GVN funding.

Public Administration: This is a growing experience - only further training and time at the task will mature it. This year things are better than they were last year. Planning has been opened more to lower echelons as the province becomes more familiar with the process. Personnel turbulence has hurt, in some cases two or three officials have been responsible during the year.

#### JOINT UNITED STATES PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

JUSPAO: With the departure of the civilian advisor to this activity last spring, the support here became one of providing excellent papers and articles. During the six months of my tour during which there was an JUSPAO advisor, I was disappointed in his approach to the task. There is of course more to advising than merely experience in the business. Personnel of higher pay grade rarely retain the idealistic urges which attract the younger inexperienced into the field to work with the people. Imagination, initiative and immediate reaction is needed when PSYOPS targets are revealed. More can be done.

## SECTION IV

### Other Areas

The Advisor - Next Time: Ten years ago when I first became an advisor to the Vietnamese, I was charged with enthusiasm for the task. I was not alone. There were several hundred young officers - mostly captains - who felt the exhilaration of the challenge. Many were sent to language training of Monterey and pursued the mission of trying to understand what needed to be done and how to do it. I, like many others of that group, was a bachelor with no other entanglements or responsibilities than to be as good as possible at whatever the mission was. I liked my unit, the people and felt I understood their culture as well as most. There were improvements to be made but I discovered that the Vietnamese were aware of that. They needed answers on equipment and procedures but often did not bring themselves to ask for fear of showing their lack of knowledge. The better we knew each other the more quickly we shared information. In brief by mid-1963 there were a significant number of dedicated young US soldiers here who could communicate with the people and who were ready to commit themselves to seeing the job through. When I sent in my second extension I was advised by my branch that I needed to return to the normal progression of assignments. I and others like me fell back into line and into promotion competition through experience in US units. I bring this out not to criticize the ticket-punching approach per se but with regret that there was not a larger hard-core of Jean Savagios tagged for serious advisory effort from the start. I would not trade my tour in combat with a US unit for anything, but a select group recognized at the start as having potential for furthering US-VN relationships and strengthening GVN would have been invaluable. Properly handled, those selected could have had US unit experience too. As I mentioned in Section I, it was extremely disappointing to me as PSA on two advisory teams to find that there were no military personnel with fluency in Vietnamese language.

The PSA program was a solid step in the effort to produce worthwhile advisory direction and esprit. Although the enticing benefits and "guarantees" to career advancement could not be fulfilled, the group who accepted the program was for the most part motivated by a desire to help the Vietnamese. I've met no PSA who was in the program purely because it was the thing to do.

The Team! The Team!! The Team!!! That's what Vince Lombardi said in Green Bay and that's what it's got to be. The larger it gets more complex and cumbersome, the less effective it is. As the team drew down to the precious few, closer ties were made with the Vietnamese and less American isolation existed. During my tour five military advisors of the nineteen on the JTD requested extensions; all were contributors and in Phu Yen there's little diversion from the mission. The government gets its money's worth from them.

After the Ceasefire: It will be unfortunate if all US personnel are pulled out of the province. The advantages of residency has been well substantiated. The immersion in the Vietnamese community helps reveal the true conditions. I would expect a much more thorough understanding of problems here if two or three Americans



with a basic fluency in Vietnamese were to remain - living in Tuy Hoa and no longer in the Province Chief's backyard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.A. Holbrook', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W.A. HOLBROOK  
LTC, INF  
Province Senior Advisor

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